IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-36 (Cancelled)

37. (Currently Amended)   A method for processing a calling card call from a caller to determine the rate associated with the call:

    receiving a called number;

    receiving a caller identifier;

    validating the calling card;

    generating at an operator module, a request for a rate quote after validation of the calling card;

    sending the request for the rate quote to a rating system, wherein ~~the~~ a rate quote module:

    performs a database look-up based on the called number and the caller identifier;

        generates a rate quote;

        sends the rate quote to the operator module.

38. (Original)   The method of Claim 1, wherein the database look-up is also based on time and date information.

39. (Original)   The method of Claim 1, wherein the request for a rate quote comprises a request to assign a rate to the call.

40. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the caller identifier comprises rate information assigned to a caller's network access number.

41. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein, for non-postalized rates, the rating system computes the distance using vertical and horizontal coordinates of an originating location and a location of the called number.

42. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the ~~rate~~ rating system assigns a single rate to all calls and the rate is cost per time unit.

43. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the rate comprises a cost per call.

44. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein when an operator module receives a validation request, the operator module sends the validation request to a validation system.

45. (New) The method of Claim 44, wherein the validation system checks a calling card number of the calling card against one or more validation databases to determine whether the calling card number is valid.

46. (New) The method of Claim 45, wherein the validation system comprises a validator and an external validation gateway.

47. (New) The method of Claim 45, wherein the one or more validation databases comprise a p-code database, a hot/cold database, a validation index database and a validation block database.

48. (New) The method of Claim 1 further comprising determining an optimum routing for the call after validation of the calling card.

49. (New) The method of Claim 48 further comprising looking-up the optimum routing for the call in a database.

50. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising accessing a feature access code of the calling card so that another call may be placed after call completion without having to re-enter calling card billing information.